

Rusty cars

Dade County (Florida) Consumer Advocate Walter T. Dartland has petitioned the **Federal Trade Commission** (FTC) to investigate Chevrolet Vega advertising which makes claims that the cars are rustproof and corrosion-resistant. He asked FTC to set standards for sheet metal corrosion and require prepurchase disclosures as to how long a car can be expected to resist rust. According to Mr. Dartland, consumers should save millions of dollars in rust repair costs and depreciation in value of their cars once rules are issued.

Shortly after the FTC petition was filed, Mr. Dartland filed a class action lawsuit against Ford Motor Co. alleging that more than 200,000 Florida residents who bought 1969 through 1974 Ford cars deserve damages because their cars rusted. The civil suit, based on 3,000 complaints from Ford owners, alleges negligent design and manufacture and charges that Ford violated its implied warranty to consumers.

These issues have prompted the Consumer Advocate to ask all consumers with rust problems on any make car to call or write him at 140 W. Flagler St., Miami, FL 33130; telephone 305-579-4206.

Note: Earlier this year the **Office of Consumer Affairs** (OCA) prepared an analysis of the automobile complaints it had received from consumers. The report showed that 28% of the auto complaints within the "defect" category (other categories include service, sales and safety) involved rust problems. OCA turned this information over to the Consumer Subcommittee of the Senate Commerce Committee which is now collecting data on an informal basis on auto rust and other forms of corrosion.

S-p-r-e-a-d-i-n-g the word

It is not too late to register for the National Warranty Update Conference in Washington, DC on Nov. 3-4. For a copy of the program and other information call Kathryn Lavriha—202-737-3732. [See CONSUMER NEWS: Sept. 15 for more details.]

Consumer educators may be interested in getting a copy of *Your Guide for Teaching Money Management*, a 40-page booklet published by Money Management Institute of Household Finance Corporation. It includes sections on values and goals, income, consumer purchasing decisions, consumer credit, savings, insurance and investments, as well as a section on consumer rights and responsibilities. Send 50¢ to Money Management Institute, Household Finance Corporation, Prudential Plaza, Chicago, IL 60601.

consumer news

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Sugar, vitamins, iron and cereals

Agriculture Dept. has asked for public comments on proposals to set new guidelines for sugar, iron and vitamin content in cereals provided to participants in the special supplemental food program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).

The invitation to comment was published in an announcement of final procedural and definitional WIC regulations in the Aug. 26 issue of the *Federal Register*. Several "Issues for Comment" are raised in the announcement (page 43211) which are not mentioned in the summary and may have been missed by individuals and groups who monitor the *Federal Register* for announcements of importance to consumers.

The WIC program is run by local health or welfare agencies through their neighborhood clinics or offices. The program provides special foods to pregnant and nursing women, to infants, and to children up to 5 years old. To be eligible, participants must be examined by a doctor, nutritionist, nurse or other health or nutrition professional and found "at nutritional risk" because of poor diet and low income. The WIC program currently serves more than 886,000 women and children through over 600 local agencies and WIC recipients are given a food package tailored to their specific nutrition needs—such as iron-fortified formula and cereal, fruit juice high in vitamin C, fortified milk, cheese and eggs.

The "Issues for Comment" raised in the announcement indicate that Agriculture is considering suggestions it received in comments on the proposed regulations just finalized that it establish maximum levels of sugar content and vitamin fortification, reduce the minimum iron content requirement, and exclude artificial flavorings and colorings for cereals authorized for WIC use. Other points on which Agriculture asks for comments are whether whole grain cereals containing no more than 15-20% sugar should be permitted regardless of iron content, whether eligibility for the program should be based on low income alone rather than a finding by a health practitioner that an applicant is at nutritional risk, and how the delivery of WIC services in rural areas can be improved.

In commenting on Agriculture's announcement, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Carol Tucker Foreman said Agriculture wants public comments on how much sugar it should permit in cereals for the WIC program because of its "concern about sugar's possible role in tooth decay, obesity and other health problems." Vitamin fortification is also being reviewed because some of the cereals meeting the current iron requirement—45% of the US Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA)—contain 100% of the RDA for some nutrients. Agriculture has received comments suggesting that consumption of these cereals, especially in large quantities by young children, may result in ingestion of excessive and possibly toxic levels of some nutrients, particularly vitamins A and D. Reduction of the iron requirement—to a suggested 25% of the RDA—would increase the variety of cereals eligible for the program, as would the inclusion of whole grain cereals. The latter, it has been suggested to Agriculture, would also contribute dietary fiber, certain B vitamins, and trace minerals to the WIC food package.

(Continued on page 2)

Recalls

• **DIETARY SUPPLEMENT—Food and Drug Administration** (FDA) announces the recall of Liquid Pre-Digested Protein, 15 grams per 30 ml. in pint and quart white plastic bottles. The oral dietary food supplement, manufactured by Peer Park Corp. Hackensack, NJ, carry the following labels: Grow Lean Liquid Protein Fortified with L-Tryptophane [Buffalo Labs]; Med Liquid Protein [Med-Sales Associates, Inc.]; Ideal Weigh Liquid Protein [FOI Ltd.]; Hudson Liquid Protein [Hudson Pharmaceutical Corp.]; Rock Honey's Mr. Universe, Terri's Miss Universe Liquid Protein [Mr. Universe Super Energy Products]; PLP Liquid Protein [All Natural Sales and Service Co.]; Nu-Paramino Liquid Protein [Lanpar Co.]. The product was also distributed in some unlabeled bottles. The lot numbers are: 314, 316, 320, 321, 323, 326, 328, 329, 331, 332, 333, 335, 338, 340, 341, 343, 344, 345, 349, 12396, 12398, 12401, 12402, 12404, 12405, 12408, 12409, 12420, and 12421.

Distribution was nationwide and the firm estimates 12,500 gallons, in pint and quart bottles remain on the market. Reason for recall: Bacterial contamination and uncontrolled pH levels.

• **PORK AND BEANS—Food and Drug Administration** (FDA) announces the recall of Ann Page Pork and Beans in Tomato Sauce in 227 gram size (8 ounce) cans, lot number BTSO/JUL78; and Ann Page Boston Style Beans with Pork and Molasses sauce in 227 gram size (8 ounce) cans, lot number BPSR/JUL78. Reason for recall: bacterial contamination.

The products, manufactured by the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Co., Inc., Horsehead, NY, were distributed in Indiana, Michigan, New Jersey, Ohio, Louisiana, New York, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Maine, Rhode Island, Vermont, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia.

• **TOY BANKS—Consumer Product Safety Commission** (CPSC) and Ideal Toy Corp. announce the recall of 60,000 "Snoopy" toy banks because the paint used on these products has a lead content which exceeds CPSC's present permissible level of 0.5%. [See this issue of CONSUMER REGISTER for CPSC's new regulations on lead paint.]

The 6 inch high multicolored banks represent the "Snoopy" character in the following costumes or poses:

Snoopy "Joe Cool" bank, model #5272-0; Snoopy Santa bank, model #5270-4; Snoopy in Tuxedo bank, model #5273-8; Snoopy Dog House bank, model #5271-2.

Consumers who have purchased these banks should return them to the retailer for a full refund.

For further information, call Ideal collect at 212-454-5000. Or call CPSC's toll free hotline: 800-638-2666. Maryland residents only: call 800-492-2937.

Sugar, etc (Continued from page 1)

If adopted, these suggested changes in WIC cereal requirements could have significant implications for consumers and manufacturers of cereals sold commercially, particularly the big 4 who produce almost 90% of US cereals: Kellogg's, General Mills, General Foods and Quaker Oats. It appears likely that, if Agriculture reduces the amounts of sugar and fortification it will accept, the pressure to place similar limits on the cereals available to non-WIC participants will be difficult to resist. Concern among consumers and consumer groups about heavily sugared and fortified cereals is already great, and various Federal agencies have been petitioned to put more stringent controls on their labeling and advertising—with little result to date.

Besides obesity and tooth decay, high sugar consumption has been associated with diabetes, heart disease, and bowel cancer, although these associations are still matters of scientific controversy.

Regarding the suggestions it has received that cereals with artificial flavors and colors be excluded from WIC, Agriculture is particularly interested in the rationale upon which comments for or against are based.

For details on commenting on the issues raised on the WIC program, see this issue of CONSUMER REGISTER.

President signs his first consumer bill

On Sept. 20, President Carter signed the Fair Debt Collection Bill (Public Law 95-109). The new law makes it a Federal offense for debt collectors to threaten consumers with violence, use obscene language, or contact consumers by telephone at inconvenient times or places.

"This bill assures that collection procedures are fair," the President said, in remarks at the bill signing ceremony. Testimony given during the hearings on this bill, the President said, showed that often innocent consumers were harassed by collectors who used profane language, made false statements either directly or by telephone, called after midnight, and made threats contrary to the law, often implying the consumer was violating the law, when in fact he or she wasn't.

Such practices, the President said, "will now be made illegal among about 500 collection agencies, most of which are honest and law-abiding and do a proper job, some of which, though, need to be corrected."

Other important provisions of the new law for consumers prohibit debt collectors from publishing "shame" lists, impersonating government officials or attorneys, obtaining information under false pretenses, and collecting more than is legally owed.

Debt collectors who violate provisions of the new law will be liable for any actual damages as well as any additional civil damages determined by the court up to \$1,000 or, in the case of a class action, \$500,000 or one per cent of net worth.

White House orders food and nutrition study

President Carter has ordered a major reorganization study of Federal food and nutrition activities. Noting that "The Federal Government is unable to respond as effectively as it should be to the important changes taking place in the production, processing and marketing of food," in a memorandum to top officials of Federal agencies, the President went on to say that "as a result our capability to develop and implement a coherent food and nutrition policy is severely hampered."

The study is to pay special attention to Federal practices in inspecting and grading food products and regulation of their labeling—particularly to determine where there is overlap and duplication—as well as Federal food and nutrition research, an area in which, the memo points out, 12 agencies currently spend about \$700 million annually with "little coordination among these entities, nor much effort to tie such research to a coherent set of goals."

Cars: Miles-per-gallon ratings for 1978 model year

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has released fuel economy data for 1978 model year cars and trucks. Following is a listing of the top 3 cars, by class, that have the best combined (city/highway) mileage, according to EPA tests. EPA groups the new cars by classes based on interior space which includes head room, shoulder room, hip room and leg room as well as the trunk and cargo space. The total useful volume, in cubic feet, places the car into its class.

The average annual cost of operating each car is listed in parentheses after the model. For example: "Datsun B-210 (\$262)" means \$262 is the average annual fuel cost based on the combined miles per gallon and estimates what a consumer would pay for fuel in one year if he or she drives 15,000 miles and pays 70¢ per gallon of gasoline (or 60¢ per gallon for diesel fuel).

The engine description lists the engine by cubic-inch-displacement (CID) and the number of cylinders.

When engine size and number of cylinders are not an adequate description of an engine, the engine type designation is also given, i.e., diesel.

MINICOMPACT CLASS (interior volume less than 85 cubic feet)

1. Datsun B-210 (\$262) 85 cubic-inch-displacement (CID), 4 cylinder (cyl), with catalyst, manual
Ratings: 40 miles per gallon (mpg) (36 city/48 highway)
2. Dodge Colt (\$276) 98 CID, 4 cyl, manual
Ratings: 38 mpg (34 city/45 highway)
3. Subaru (\$284) 97 CID, 4 cyl, manual
Ratings: 37 mpg (31 city/46 highway)

SUBCOMPACT CLASS (interior volume between 85 and 100 cubic feet)

1. Volkswagen Rabbit (\$200) Diesel, 90 CID, 4 cyl, manual
Ratings: 45 mpg (40 city/53 highway)
2. Toyota Corolla (\$269) 71 CID, 4 cyl, manual
Ratings: 39 mpg (34 city/46 highway)
3. Ford Fiesta (\$276) 98 CID, 4 cyl, manual
Ratings: 38 mpg (34 city/46 highway)
(Tie) Mazda GLC (\$276) 78 CID, 4 cyl, manual
Ratings: 38 mpg (35 city/44 highway)

COMPACT CLASS (interior volume between 100 and 110 cubic feet)

1. Peugeot 504 (\$300) Diesel, 141 CID, 4 cyl, manual
Ratings: 30 mpg (28 city/34 highway)
2. Peugeot 504 (\$321) Diesel, 141 CID, 4 cyl, automatic, fuel injection
Ratings: 28 mpg (25 city/31 highway)
3. Dodge Aspen (\$457) 225 CID, 6 cyl, automatic or manual
Ratings: 23 mpg (20 city/28 highway) (M); (20 city/27 highway) (A)
(Tie) Plymouth Volare (\$457) 225 CID, 6 cyl, automatic or manual
Ratings: 23 mpg (20 city/28 highway) (M); (20 city/27 highway) (A)
(Tie) Pontiac Phoenix (\$457) 151 CID, 4 cyl, automatic,
Ratings: 23 mpg (21 city/27 highway)

MID-SIZE CLASS (interior volume between 110 and 120 cubic feet)

1. Ford Fairmont (\$404) 140 CID, 4 cyl, automatic or manual
Ratings: 26 mpg (23 city/33 highway) (M); (22 city/33 highway) (A)
(Tie) Lincoln-Mercury Zephyr (\$404) 140 CID, 4 cyl, automatic or manual
Ratings: 26 mpg (23 city/33 highway) (M); (22 city/33 highway) (A)
2. Chevrolet Malibu (\$438) 200 CID, 6 cyl, manual
Ratings: 24 mpg (21 city/29 highway)
(Tie) Ford Fairmont (\$438) 200 CID, 6 cyl, manual
Ratings: 24 mpg (21 city/29 highway)
(Tie) Lincoln-Mercury Zephyr (\$438) 200 CID, 6 cyl, manual
Ratings: 24 mpg (21 city/29 highway)
3. Buick Century (\$457) 196 CID, 6 cyl, manual
Ratings: 23 mpg (19 city/33 highway)
(Tie) Buick Regal (\$457) 196 CID, 6 cyl, manual
Ratings: 23 mpg (19 city/33 highway)
(Tie) Oldsmobile Cutlass (\$457) 260 CID, 8 cyl, manual
Ratings: 23 mpg (20 city/29 highway)
(Tie) Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme (\$457) 260 CID, 8 cyl, manual
Ratings: 23 mpg (20 city/29 highway)

LARGE-SIZE CLASS (interior volume of more than 120 cubic feet)

1. Oldsmobile Delta 88 (\$375) Diesel, 350 CID, 8 cyl, automatic
Ratings: 24 mpg (21 city/30 highway)

(Continued on back page)

Cars (Continued from page 7)

- (Tie) Oldsmobile 98 (\$375) Diesel, 350 CID, 8 cyl, automatic
Ratings: 24 mpg (21 city/30 highway)
2. Oldsmobile Delta 88 (\$500) 260 CID, 8 cyl, automatic
Ratings: 21 mpg (18 city/25 highway)
3. Buick LeSabre (\$525) 231 CID, 6 cyl, automatic
Ratings: 20 mpg (17 city/25 highway)

- (Tie) Buick LeSabre (\$525) 301 CID, 8 cyl, automatic
Ratings: 20 mpg (17 city/24 highway)
- (Tie) Oldsmobile Delta 88 (\$525) 231 CID, 6 cyl, automatic
Ratings: 20 mpg (17 city/25 highway)
- (Tie) Pontiac LeSabre (\$525) 301 CID, 8 cyl, automatic
Ratings: 20 mpg (17 city/24 highway)

The first edition of the 1978 *Gas Mileage Guide for New Car Buyers*, which will be available in car dealers' showrooms early next month, provides information for 91% of all cars to be sold in the US during the 1978 model year. The second edition will be published next February. Free copies of the *Guide* will also be available next month from the Consumer Information Center. Write Fuel Economy, Pueblo, CO 81009.

While the validity of past EPA gas mileage estimates has been questioned because many consumers have reported that actual mileage received has not equalled the estimates, the *Guide* is useful when comparing the gas mileage of one car relative to another model. And EPA acknowledges that many drivers will not match the estimates, but this can be explained by variances in how and where cars are driven.

EPA test estimates, on the other hand, are conducted in a controlled environment in order to insure the comparability of the estimates among different models. This comparability would be lost if difficult-to-control factors such as weather or road conditions—factors that can affect the gas mileage you receive—were considered. Other variables include driving habits, vehicle maintenance, options and altitude.

The **Comptroller General of the US**, in a recent report to Congress, cited the gas mileage loss that can result from these varying conditions. The report showed that motorists can experience, for instance, a gas mileage loss of 15% when driving on broken or patched asphalt; 35% when driving on gravel; 45% when driving on sand; 32% when driving up a 3% grade; and 55% when driving up a 7% grade.

As for environmental factors, the report said a 12% gain in mileage can be achieved with a tail wind of 18 miles per hour; and 8% loss in gas mileage can result when driving into an 18 mile-per-hour head wind; and a 10% loss when driving against an 18 mile-per-hour crosswind.

An improperly maintained car can reduce your gas mileage too. A 7% loss in gas mileage can result from a sparkplug misfiring 50% of the time; a 7% loss from tires underinflated by 35%; and a 2% loss from front tires 1/4 inch out of alignment.

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